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The (Anarchic) Gift of *Gelassenheit*: On an Undeveloped Motif in Derrida's *Donner le temps II*

Ian Alexander Moore, (c) 2023

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Abstract: In his recently published *Donner le temps II*, Derrida raises the possibility that Heidegger's notion of *Gelassenheit* ('releasement', 'letting-be') might escape the economic confines of exchange, debt, and repayment and therefore qualify as a pure gift. In this paper, I explore this possibility, explaining that *Gelassenheit* would have to be understood, first, not primarily as a human comportment but at the level of being itself, second, beyond appropriation, and third, as 'without why'. If Heidegger's focus on appropriation in 'Time and Being' remains entangled in the economy of exchange (as Derrida insinuates in the final session of *Donner le temps II*), Heidegger's anarchic treatment of 'letting' (*laisser, Lassen*) in the final session of his 1969 seminar in Le Thor opens instead onto a 'pure giving' (*pur donner, reines Geben*).

'Le *laisser* est alors le pur *donner*'.
—Heidegger, in Le Thor, France, 1969

Near the beginning of the seventh session of *Donner le temps II*,¹ Derrida asks whether there might be a way to think a letting, *un laisser*, that would escape the economic confines of exchange, debt, and repayment—whether, in other words, there might be a way to give *purely*, without expectation of reciprocity, without ulterior motive, or even

¹ Ed. Laura Odello, Peter Szendy, and Rodrigo Therezo (Paris: Seuil, 2021) (= 'DTII'). I will cite Heidegger according to the *Gesamtausgabe*, 102 vols. (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1975–) (= 'GA'). All

without motive at all. In this session, Derrida not only confirms Heidegger's importance for a thinking of the gift, an importance that he had already highlighted as second to none in earlier sessions.² More specifically, Derrida suggests that this importance may have to do with Heidegger's term of art *Gelassenheit*, which means not only serenity and calm composure but also, more philosophically, letting-be and releasement:

can one let or remain, or rather (since the 'one' still designates an active subject in the impersonal mode),³ can the letting [*le laissant*] or the remaining let, or be let, or remain outside of the system of indebtedness [...] / Perhaps, later on, we will catch sight of a passage, a way, a step between this letting-let [*laissant-laisser*] or letting-remain and the *Gelassenheit* of which Heidegger's later texts speak to us, a word [namely, *Gelassenheit*] that is hardly translatable by a [single] word. [...] We will get there or come back to it only later, much later, if, at least, we ever do. Promised land or mirage [...]. (DTII: 32)

I want to note four things about this passage. First, Derrida links the possibility of the pure gift to Heidegger's works on the theme of *Gelassenheit*. By 'later [or last, *derniers*] texts', Derrida presumably means not only Heidegger's 1962 lecture 'Time and Being', which he will go on to treat extemporaneously in the final session of *Donner le temps II*, but also the 1959 volume titled *Gelassenheit* and the celebrated 1969 seminar in Le Thor, France, neither of which will Derrida examine in *Donner le temps*. Heidegger's seminar had recently been published in the original French transcripts in the collection *Questions IV* (1976), which Derrida refers to in session twelve (DTII: 139).⁴ Although neither

translations for which I do not supply an English edition are my own.

² *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 24 et passim. See also the sixth, still-unpublished session of *Donner le temps*, located at the Institut Mémoires de l'édition contemporaine, call number 219DRR/227/2, pp. 3, 8, as well as Adam Rosenthal, "On Derrida's *Donner le temps*, Volumes I & II: A New Engagement with Heidegger," *Research in Phenomenology* 52 (2022): 23–47.

³ Derrida's French here is an anacoluthon: 'peut-on laisser ou rester, ou plutôt puisque le on (désignant encore un sujet actif sur le mode impersonnel) [...]'. I have not carried this over in the translation.

⁴ See Martin Heidegger, *Questions IV* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976). Derrida's personal copy of the latter, in The Library of Jacques Derrida, Studio Series, RBD1, Rare Book Division, Department of Special Collections, Princeton University Library, Box B-000201, Folder 10, is heavily annotated. Heidegger's seminar had also been available to a select audience through a private printing of two-hundred copies in 1969: *Séminaire tenu au Thor en septembre 1969 par le Professeur Martin Heidegger*. Even if Derrida did not own a copy

‘Time and Being’ nor the 1969 seminar, on which I will be focusing, uses the word *Gelassenheit* specifically, they both develop the idea that, at the deepest level, being itself is a gift of *Lassen*, of letting, which Derrida recognizes at the very end of *Donner le temps II*. The idea of *Gelassenheit* at the level of being itself is, in any case, absent from the earlier writings by Heidegger that Derrida goes on to examine under the heading of what one might call an ontic giving of *Gelassenheit*, where the term, on Derrida’s reading, would refer to a human comportment of love without warning or acquittal, of disinterested interest ‘without indifference or detachment’ (*détachement*) (DTII: 33–34, 50–51).⁵ And yet, as Heidegger emphasizes on several occasions, *Gelassenheit* is not essentially a matter of human comportment, however necessary the latter may be. To cite just one, admittedly arcane example:

“Released” and “Releasement” [“*Gelassen*” und “*Gelassenheit*”]—now no longer to be conceived primarily from the perspective of human comportment, but from out of the appropriative event [*Ereignis*] [...]. [L]etting-be [*Sein-lassen*] is already admitted [*eingelassen*] into being and comes out of being, which must have admitted and let the human essence into the sheltering of being [*Seyn*]—so that being itself properly takes place [*sich ereignet*] as the having-let [*Gelassen-haben*], as the essencing in-each-case-having-let—as releasement. (GA 97: 295–296)⁶

Second, *Gelassenheit* may well be ‘hardly translatable by a [single] word’, but it is noteworthy that, when it was coined by Meister Eckhart in the thirteenth century in its Middle High German form, it was as a synonym—thus precisely as a translation, from

of the private printing, he could have accessed one through many of his friends who did. There was, finally, a German version that had just been published as Martin Heidegger, *Vier Seminare: Le Thor 1966, 1968, 1969, Zähringen 1973* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1977). Derrida owned a copy of the latter as well (The Library of Jacques Derrida, Box 335, Folder 12).

⁵ Key texts here, as Derrida himself suggests, would be Heidegger’s lecture ‘On the Essence of Truth’ and his two Nietzsche-volumes, all of which would need to be read alongside, and to be read along the lines of, the analysis of disinterested pleasure that Derrida had just undertaken in *Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987; first published in 1978), especially 44. See also GA 6.1: 106–114.

⁶ See also GA 99: 40, 123; GA 101: 87. Even ‘Time and Being’ tries, without reference to entities (and hence, in the first instance, without reference to the human), to think the ‘it’ that gives or *lets* being-ness

within German—of *Abgeschiedenheit* or ‘detachment’, a term from which Derrida tries to dissociate *Gelassenheit*. *Abgeschiedenheit*, also coined by Eckhart, was not merely a matter of human comportment either. It was essentially a characterization of the Godhead beyond or beneath the Trinity and hence, for Eckhart, of the very manner of being itself.⁷ (Incidentally, according to Heidegger, this term *Abgeschiedenheit* stands at the center of Georg Trakl’s poetic work; nevertheless, Derrida does surprisingly little with it in *Geschlecht III*. In my work on the latter text, I have argued that *Abgeschiedenheit*, even more than *Geschlecht*, is a crucial site of deconstruction in Heidegger’s ‘Language in the Poem’, not only for moving beyond Heidegger’s national humanism, but also for liberation into love as an affirmation of the Other.⁸ In this paper, I will argue that *Gelassenheit* is a comparably significant site, even if Derrida does surprisingly little with it, too.) In a 1999 interview, Derrida related the following:

At present, what is happening for me with Heidegger plays out more and more with respect to traditions that I don’t know well but that I would like to cultivate: both Eckhart, whom I know adequately, and Luther, whom I don’t know well directly: I feel more and more that Heidegger cannot be read without this background.⁹

Would a deeper acquaintance with this background have yielded a more robust treatment, in *Donner le temps II*, of the *Gelassenheit* of being (and, in *Geschlecht III*, of *Abgeschiedenheit* in all its valences)?

In any event—and these are my third and fourth remarks on the initial block quotation—Derrida does recognize that *Gelassenheit*, whether of the human or of being, precedes the distinction between activity and passivity and thus the distinction between subject and object (DTII: 31, 36, 59, 86), and he also recognizes that *Gelassenheit*, at the level of being itself, is crucial, not just for Heidegger, but indeed for any attempt to think

and time (GA 14: 5–6).

⁷ For more on this claim, see Ian Alexander Moore, *Eckhart, Heidegger, and the Imperative of Releasement* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2019), chapter 3.

⁸ Ian Alexander Moore, “For the Love of Detachment: Trakl, Heidegger, and Derrida’s *Geschlecht III*,” *International Yearbook of Hermeneutics* 18 (2019): 233–256; revised and expanded in Moore, *Dialogue on the Threshold: Heidegger and Trakl* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2022), chapter 3.

and to ‘live’ in accordance with a gift ‘beyond presence’ (DTII: 32; see also 104). The crux of the matter is to determine whether *Gelassenheit* is, in fact, *the* matter—the *Sache*—of the gift, whether it is a mere illusion, or whether, like Derridean justice, it is a promise to be kept alive as a promise, something like messianic hope. At the end of the opening quotation, Derrida wonders whether *Gelassenheit* is a ‘promised land’ or a ‘mirage’. The Biblical language of the promised land alludes to the previous, still-unpublished sixth session of *Donner le temps*, in which Derrida speaks of a ‘Mosaic paradigm’ in the thinking of the gift. Whereas Moses Freud and Moses Mauss only gave hints from afar, Joshua Lacan and Joshua Lévi-Strauss were willing to enter the Land of Milk and Honey and behold its splendor.¹⁰ Recall, though, that none of these figures went as far as Heidegger. Would, therefore, Heidegger be the one to break with the Biblical paradigm, or would he, like Jesus, be the one to fulfill it? Is Heidegger the messiah of the gift, promising (perhaps despite himself), not a terrestrial land, but a new, heavenly Jerusalem? Or is he more like the sorcerer Elymas, who was struck blind for his false teaching, giving no more than the semblance of a mirage?

To answer this, I want to begin with a discussion of ‘Time and Being’, before turning to the 1969 seminar in Le Thor. In the former text, Heidegger speaks of an anonymous ‘it’ that gives—and therefore conceptually precedes—both being (as the being *of* entities or their being-ness) and time (as the unified interrelation of future, having-been, and present) (GA 14: 19). This *Es gibt*, this ‘it gives’, in Heidegger’s lecture, has eleven implications for any attempt to think the pure gift, only some of which are examined by Derrida in his seminar.

First, ‘it’ gives being, which is nothing, i.e., not a thing or an entity (GA 14: 7–8, 13). ‘It’ is a giver of nothing. Second, ‘it’, too, is no-thing and hence, third, cannot be understood by way of categories applicable to things or entities, whether they be Aristotelian (substance, place, time, acting, undergoing, etc.) or Kantian (unity, cause and effect, necessity and contingency, possibility and impossibility, etc.). Fourth, ‘it’ cannot even be understood in its deepest sense by recourse to the human (GA 14: 5–6), who, after all, is *an* entity, albeit one that plays a crucial role in the sheltering or safeguarding

⁹ Dominique Janicaud, *Heidegger en france*, 2 vols. (Paris: Albin Michel, 2001), 2:104.

¹⁰ *Op. cit.*, pp. 15–16; cf. DTII: 20–21, 32–33.

of being itself. (Note that, despite occasional misgivings on Heidegger's part, being itself or being, as Heidegger sometimes writes it, is another way of speaking about the appropriative event of the 'it' and should not be conflated either with entities or with the given being-ness of those entities.¹¹) Heidegger had long abandoned the project of fundamental ontology. Fifth, the 'it' that gives being gives to no one, nor, sixth, is it itself someone; for, being, whether as the being of entities or as being itself, is not a person. Seventh, as non-ontic, 'it' is not a god either, not even the highest one. Eighth, in giving the presence (ontological) of what is present (ontic), the 'it' does not appear as such. It is, one might say, hypo-phenomenological, accessible only to what Heidegger would later call 'a phenomenology of the inapparent' (GA 15: 417). Ninth, as pre- or, better, infra-temporal, the 'it' is the condition for the possibility of time and thus cannot itself ultimately be subject to that which it makes possible. Tenth, the same may be said for the 'it' as infra-rational or hypo-logical. It occurs *ohne Warum*, 'without any reason why', to borrow a phrase from Eckhart.¹² Eleventh, although 'it' gives being and time, it does so in such a way that being and time, being as time, fall into oblivion, and we concern ourselves only with entities. The 'it', as deeper than forgotten being and time, itself thereby falls into a deeper oblivion. In hiding what it gives, and in hiding itself in the hiding of what it gives, the 'it', Derrida will say, takes back what it gives, by which I understand him to mean that the gift withdraws from knowledge of it as a gift, a knowledge that would require reciprocity, restitution, or rejection and would therefore inscribe the gift into the economy that it first opens up and that it can subsequently interrupt.

These eleven implications of the *Es gibt* qualify it for consideration as a—perhaps *the*—gift pure and simple. They would seem to meet the criteria for the gift that Derrida identifies throughout his seminar, especially in what would become the first chapter of *Given Time: I*: the 'it' that gives is literally non-apparent, neither subjective nor objective, middle-voiced, possessionless (giving what it does not have), evental qua infra-temporal and qua infra-rational, playful (or, as I would gloss it, a-teleocratic and without why),

¹¹ Derrida recognizes as much in *Given Time: I*, 19.

¹² *Âne* or *sunder warumbe* in Middle High German, *sine principio* in Latin. See, for example, Meister Eckhart, *Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke*, herausgegeben im Auftrag der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft, 11 vols. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1936–), DW 1: 90,11–91,2; LW 3: 16, §19.

and—as pre-categorical—pre-modal and therefore *im*-possible. All signs would seem to be pointing toward Heidegger as the thinker of the gift and as the one who gives the gift to be thought.

However, before attempting to read these signs more closely, let alone taking them as gospel, we need to consider an objection that readers of Derrida on Heidegger, his self-avowed ‘contre-maître’,¹³ would have expected him to make in the seminar, but that he only intimates.¹⁴ The objection concerns the status of appropriation, propriety, and the proper in Heidegger, a status on which, Derrida notes, ‘the entire weight of the question’ of how to think the *Es gibt* rests (DTII: 216). Even if receiving the un-apparent gift of the self-withdrawing ‘it’ does not mean receiving a particular *thing*, there is still the expectation that one ‘hold oneself in relation to’ or ‘correspond with’ this donation and, furthermore, that one do so properly (DTII: 222; see also 37). The ‘it’, Heidegger explains in ‘Time and Being’, is also the *Er-eignis*, the event of *appropriation*, and however much it may be pulled by a counter-thrust of *Ent-eignis*, of expropriation, we are entrusted with the responsibility of tending it as best we can; to be human is to be the ‘shepherd of being’ (GA 9: 331, 342). *Denken ist danken*, ‘to think is to thank’ (GA 75: 309; see also GA 8: 146), and to thank is to pay back, even if one has received no-thing and returns no-thing. To think, which is to be human essentially, properly, is therefore to be obliged to the gift of being itself and not merely, as §68 of *Being and Time* would have it, to be guilty as the thrown basis of a nullity. Heidegger never forgot his Luther (in whom, by the way, many of the problems with the pure gift are already delineated and addressed).¹⁵

It was, I believe, in this critical direction that *Donner le temps II* was headed. Here are the final words of Derrida’s seminar:

What would remain to be followed is the passage of this *Reichen* [namely, of ‘the reaching-into-one-another of future, having been, and present’, GA 14: 26], of what gathers in extending, which here will make us pass to the value of property,

¹³ Catherine Malabou and Jacques Derrida, *Jacques Derrida: La contre-allée* (Paris: La Quinzaine Littéraire, 1999), 57.

¹⁴ Even in *Given Time: I*, 127–28n12, this objection occurs only in the form of a footnoted reference to the earlier lecture ‘Différance’ (1968), a footnote that was a later addition to the seminar typescript.

of the proper, what appropriating, appropriation, means. And the word ‘*Ereignis*’ is going to support the final stage, ‘*Ereignis*’ not in the current sense of event but in the sense of appropriation. And just as manifestation, letting-be, or letting-appear does not go without appropriating, the movement of *Ereignis* does not go without *Enteignis*, de-appropriation [*déappropriation*]. One will see how the meditation on *Ereignis* unfolds and how in the end one passes or one returns from a certain *Es gibt* to a certain *Es gilt*. It is valid. It is necessary. There is interest in, etc. (DTII: 228)

There is a shift, by way of the proper, from donation to obligation, to adjudication, and to validation. The putative purity of the gift would therefore seem to be *vergiftet*, poisoned, indeed from the very beginning.¹⁶

What, however, of the letting with which we began? Is it a property of appropriation, as Derrida suggests, hence bound by the economy of the proper? Or might the inevitable ex- or de-appropriation that accompanies all appropriation unbind it from this economy? Although *Ent-eignis* is a linguistic modification of *eigen*—it is a *dis*-owning or *dis*-possession—might it point toward a positive way of being, one that could be described, with Eckhart, not only paradoxically as a way-less way, but also as *Gelassenheit*?

It is true that Heidegger associates letting with the proper and with appropriation, as for example in this passage from ‘Time and Being’:

If we think [...] being in the sense of presencing [*Anwesen*] and letting-presence [*Anwesenlassen*], which are given [*es gibt*] in the destinal sending [*Geschick*, sc., of being itself], [...] then being belongs to appropriating. It is from the latter that giving and its gift are determined. (GA 14: 26)

On this account, letting and the gift, the gift of letting, are subordinate to appropriation.

¹⁵ See Risto Saarinen, *Luther and the Gift* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017).

¹⁶ Contrast, however, Jacques Derrida, *Glas* (1974), trans. John P. Leavey, Jr. and Richard Rand (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 242, where the *Es gibt* in “Time and Being” is said to “displace[] all that is determined under the name *Ereignis*.” Also in Derrida, *Cinders* (1987), trans. and ed. Ned Lukacher

Heidegger paints a different picture in the final session of the 1969 Thor seminar.¹⁷ He does, to be sure, eventually bring the idea of letting together with *Ereignis*, but when he does so they are situated on the same plane. Furthermore, just before this coordination, he suggests, albeit in the barest of outlines, the possibility of a letting beyond all gathering and hence, I will argue, beyond all appropriation. Despite the advances of ‘Time and Being’, it is here that we should try to find what Heidegger himself calls ‘the pure *giving*’.¹⁸

After declaring that ‘the deepest sense of *being* is *letting* [laisser / Lassen]’,¹⁹ Heidegger proceeds to distinguish three ways in which ‘letting’ can be understood. The first is ontic, allowing an entity or entities to be the entity or entities they are. This corresponds to the formal or methodological conception of phenomenology as *apophainesthai ta phainomena* in §7 of *Being and Time*. The second, more profound meaning of letting is ontological insofar as it is directed at the presence (the *(par-)*ousia or being-ness) of an entity or of entities as a whole and as such. This corresponds roughly to *Being and Time*’s de-formalized conception of phenomenology, according to which the philosopher must take being, as ‘that on the basis of which entities are in each case already understood’ (GA 2: 8), as the chief content or subject matter; only, beginning in the 1930s, Heidegger comes to view the being of entities, their being-ness, as subject to historical variation. In the Thor-seminar, Heidegger describes the second sense of letting with the term *Anwesenlassen*, and stresses the *Anwesen*. It means letting-presence or letting-enter-into-presence and pertains as much to the way in which being allows entities to be meaningfully present as it does to the phenomenologist’s allowing this meaningful presence to manifest itself. From the perspective of the late Heidegger, we have yet to leave the domain of metaphysics, however, since we have yet to consider, not merely the ontological difference between being and entities or between presence and present things, but that which *enables* this difference and its ability to change over the course of history. The third sense of letting brings the source of the difference into view. Heidegger also

(Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 48. See also *Glas*, 167.

¹⁷ A picture whose outlines Heidegger sketched already in 1945 in the first ‘Country Path Conversation’ (available in part in the aforementioned volume by Heidegger titled *Gelassenheit*), but which I cannot retrace here. See, however, Moore, *Eckhart, Heidegger, and the Imperative of Releasement*, chapter 7.

¹⁸ Heidegger, *Questions IV*, 300. Cf. the German translation in GA 15: 365. I will generally translate from the original French protocols.

uses the term *Anwesenlassen* to characterize this source, but now he breaks it into two parts and highlights the *lassen*, the letting itself. The presencing or being-ness of entities is *itself* ‘let’. There is not only the letting of *something* enter into presence, but also the letting of any and all presencing as such. As Heidegger puts it:

It is no longer the entry into presence [*l’entrée en présence / Anwesenheit*] that is underlined, but the *letting* itself. *Es gibt* then signifies, strictly speaking, “*letting* the entry into presence” [“*laisser l’entrer en présence*” / “*Lassen das Anwesen*”]. It is then no longer at all the presence of entities that draws attention, but that on the basis of which it [namely, this presence] detaches itself [*se détache*, or makes itself independent, *sich verselbstständigt*] in masking it [namely, this basis]—[a basis that is] the letting itself, the gift of [—Heidegger now cites from ‘Time and Being’—] “the giving that gives only its gift but holds itself back [*se retient / sich zurückhält*] and withdraws [*se soustrait / sich entzieht*] in such giving”.²⁰

Heidegger continues, on the following page:

Letting (releasing/abandoning?) [*Laissant (délaissant?) / läßt (entläßt?)*] the entry into presence, that is to say, letting being [*laissant l’être / läßt das Sein*, i.e., letting the being-ness or the being of entities], this third sense signals the *epochē* of being. In this third sense, one is placed before being *as* being [i.e., before ‘beyng’ or the source of the ontological difference], and not before one of the figures of its destining [i.e., one of its many epochs].²¹

I would like, in conclusion, to take Heidegger in a direction in which the man may not have wished to go,²² but in which these and related passages are pointing. Not toward appropriation, not even toward expropriation as its insuperable counterpart, but toward a

¹⁹ *Questions IV*, 299/GA 15: 363.

²⁰ *Questions IV*, 300/GA 15: 364. I have translated Heidegger’s citation of ‘Time and Being’ directly from the German (GA 14: 12).

²¹ *Questions IV*, 300/GA 15: 365.

²² Cf. Reiner Schürmann, *Heidegger on Being and Acting: From Principles to Anarchy*, trans. Christine-Marie Gros in collaboration with the author (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 3.

locus and a way of life outside of the economies of propriety, property, and the proper—economies that Heidegger, it should be noted, was either too hasty to import into the supposed hypo- or an-economy of the *Es gibt* or too tentative to subject to deconstruction. With Reiner Schürmann, I believe the discursive regularity named ‘Heidegger’ must be taken in the direction of an anarchic *Gelassenheit* that, if ever there were one, would be the gift *tout court*. To be sure, the final implication of Heidegger’s work on the *Es gibt* that I drew above and that Heidegger reiterates when citing himself in his seminar in Le Thor was that the ‘it’ ineluctably withdraws from what it gives. But Heidegger did not, as it were, unfold the implication of this implication. It is not enough to say that being withdraws if it still needs and uses (*braucht*) us (that is to say, being is not a demiurge), if it has and will continue to work to bring us into our own (*vereignet*) so as to tend it (that is to say, being neither is nor has a telos), if, in other words, being admits of the logic of the *vergiftete* gift. For there to be a gift, it is necessary to leave all of this behind, including, perhaps, the very language of the gift. But what does it mean to leave behind?

To let—*laisser / lassen*—is not merely to let enter into presence, but also, as Heidegger is able to express only in an interrogative parenthetical, to release or to abandon—*délaisser / entlassen*—whatever may have come about, to pay it no mind and to expect nothing in return. The deepest meaning of being is letting. But—taking the prefixes *dé-* and *ent-* as intensifiers—the deepest meaning of letting is abandonment. It is to let to such an extent that one, whether it be being or the human being, leaves behind propriety and impropriety, leaves behind the give and take of exchange and the giving of reasons and the asking for them, and leaves behind all principles and ends. Only then might one be able to let things be (*sein lassen*); only then might one be able to let oneself engage with them (*sich einlassen*) and to devote or abandon oneself to them (*sich hingeben*) in their unsubsumable singularity.²³ The gift of *Gelassenheit* is an-archy.

To the rose of Angelus Silesius, which blooms only because it blooms, and to everything like it, Heidegger once said that the principle of sufficient reason did not apply. Unwilling to develop it, he even went so far as to suggest ‘that the human, in the

²³ See Derrida’s positive deployment of the French *abandon* in connection with *Eingelassenheit* and *Hingabe* in DTII: 51, 164. See also GA 5: 16, and the philosophy of Reiner Schürmann, e.g., “Trouver

most concealed ground of his essence, truly *is* only when, in his way, he is like the rose—without why’ (GA 10: 58). Heidegger is less the messiah of the gift than a reluctant disciple of medieval German mysticism, in which Silesius was also schooled. I can hardly explain here what a life of releasement without why might look like, so let me just end with a quotation from this tradition that captures something of what I am after, a quotation that paradoxically speaks of such life in terms of death. The quotation comes from a sermon likely written by an anonymous follower of Eckhart. It reads:

Now when the soul has gone out from her created being and from the uncreated being in which she finds herself in the eternal image, and has entered the divine nature where she cannot comprehend the kingdom of God and where she knows that no creature can enter the kingdom of God, then the soul discovers herself, goes her own way and never seeks God; and thus she dies her highest death. In this death the soul loses all her desire, all images, all understanding and form and is stripped of all being [*beroubet aller wesen*]. [...] And so whether such people act or refrain from acting, they will remain the same, for their works neither give [*engebent*] to them nor take anything from them.²⁴

enfin l’origine,” *La vie spirituelle* 127, no. 596 (May–June 1973): 388–96.

²⁴ Eckhart, *Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke*, DW 4: 1130,374–79, 1138,407–408/*Meister Eckhart: Selected Writings*, trans. Oliver Davies (London: Penguin, 1994), 247–48, 251 (trans. mod.).